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ABSTRACT

In order to investigate the levels of self-acceptance of occupational and transfer students, a sample of 1,190 students enrolled in four Illinois community colleges were administered a personal data sheet and the Berger Self-Acceptance Scale (SAS). The data sheet recorded age (below 20, 21-25, and over 25), marital status (married or single), and sex. Factors included in the definition of self-acceptance were: faith in one's capacity to cope with life, consideration of oneself as a person of worth on an equal plane with others, assumption of responsibility for and acceptance of the consequences of one's behavior, and acceptance of praise or criticism objectively. Study findings included the following: (1) transfer students showed significantly higher levels of self-acceptance; (2) marital status was significantly and positively related to SAS scores in both groups; (3) sex was not significantly related to SAS scores for either group, though males did score slightly higher than females; and (4) results on the age variable showed that among the transfer students, the "over 26" group scored significantly higher than the younger groups; while the same pattern was revealed in the occupational group, the difference was not significant. References to other studies of student personality are included in the study report. (AYC)

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Self-Acceptance Among Transfer and Occupational Community College Students

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This report is based upon an investigation of the relationship between occupational and transfer community college students on self-acceptance. The Berger Self-Acceptance Scale (SAS) was utilized to measure self-acceptance levels. It was hypothesized that SAS scores would not differ among the transfer and occupational community college students as a total group or on the basis of age, marital status, and subject sex.

Only a limited number of studies have compared the self-perception of occupational students, and the results have yielded inconclusive results. Oman (1971) suggested that transfer students had more positive perception of their occupational goals, which is obviously a critical component in viewing the self. Furthermore, Brue (1971) found that transfer students were more pragmatic in evaluating themselves. The more assertive self-perceptions of transfer were further exemplified by the findings of George, Minkevich, and Hoeman (1973) in which they reported that transfer students felt more comfortable being critical of others and had greater leadership needs than the occupational students.

Other studies report that few differences were found between the transfer and occupational students. Tate (1972) found only minor personality differences between these two groups and Maynard (1975) supported Tate's conclusions. Minkevich (1972) found no significant differences between the two groups on self-concept as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. This scale was constructed for administration to both children and adults.

The inconsistent results may be an outcome of instruments not specifically constructed for adults and efforts to measure a wide range of personality traits. Community college students are an extremely diverse population and we have reason to believe that their characteristics are more like the general non-college group than the four-year resident college students (Astin,

1977, pp. 10-24). The Berger Self-Acceptance Scale was constructed to be administered to a wide range of adults, and it has the potential for yielding data that would assist educators better understand the needs of community college students. It is easy to administer and it measures self-acceptance, which is a core factor on how individuals perceive themselves and their environment.

METHOD

The sample in this study consisted of 1,190 community college students enrolled in four Illinois community colleges. The data was collected from the subjects in randomly selected classrooms which enrolled both transfer and occupational students. The two groups in the sample were identified according to each student's classification of himself.

The subjects were administered a personal data sheet along with the Self-Acceptance Scale. On the data sheet, the three independent variables were recorded. The three variables were: (1) age (below 20, 21-25, and 26 or older), (2) marital status (married or single), and (3) subject sex. The dependent variable was the Self-Acceptance Scale (SAS).

Factors included in the definition of a self-accepting person in the SAS were: (1) having faith in his capacity to cope with life, (2) considers himself a person of worth on an equal plane with others, (3) assumes responsibility for and accepts consequences of his own behavior, and (4) accepts praise or criticism from others objectively. The 36-item SAS was found to have satisfactory matched-half reliability with a correlation of .894 or greater (Berger, 1952). In a test of predictive validity, 20 subjects wrote essays about themselves which were then scored for self-acceptance by four judges, who determined that the average intercorrelations on the SAS and essay ratings were .897 (Robinson & Schaver, 1973). Each item is answered

on a five point scale and a high score indicates a high (good) self-acceptance.

The analysis of data included computing the means and standard deviations on the Self Acceptance Scale scores for all the subjects as well as for each level of the three independent variables. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine differences between occupational and transfer students on the SAS. Three way ANOVA's were performed to test the SAS scores by the three independent variables for the occupational and transfer groups.

FINDINGS

The transfer and occupational students were compared on Self-Acceptance Scale scores. The one-way ANOVA results indicate (see Table 1) that the two groups differed at the .05 significance level. The mean scores show that the transfer students had higher SAS scores.

Tables 2 and 3 show that the marital status variable was significant at the .001 level for both the transfer and occupational students, and the marrieds scored higher on the SAS than the singles in both groups. However, a further perusal of Tables 2 and 3 shows that sex was not significant for either the transfer or occupational groups. In both tests, males did score slightly higher than the females.

Table 1

Numbers, Means, Standard Deviations and Analysis of Variance of Self-Acceptance Scale Scores Between Transfer and Occupational Community College Students.

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	F
Transfer	139.02	20.88	646	6.12*
Occupational	135.96	21.77	537	

*Significant at the .05 level

Table 2

Numbers, Means, Standard Deviations and Analysis of Variance of Self-Acceptance Scale Scores of the Transfer Students by Marital Status, Age, and Sex.

Variables	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	F
Marital Status	Single	136,64	20.77	483	26.52*
	Married	146.14	19.67	163	
Age	Below 20	135.41	20.63	356	9.75*
	21-25	138.56	21.71	161	
	Over 26	149.50	16.82	129	
Sex	Male	139.96	22.36	262	.09
	Female	135.43	19.87	384	

*Significant at the .001 level

Table 3

Numbers, Means, Standard Deviations and Analysis of Variance of Self-Acceptance Scale Scores of the Occupational Students by Marital Status, Age, and Sex.

Variables	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	F
Marital Status	Single	131.47	22.52	304	30.67*
	Married	141.69	19.41	238	
Age	Below 20	130.93	22.94	231	.53
	21-25	136.61	20.40	109	
	Over 26	141.36	19.73	202	
Sex	Male	136.16	22.04	274	.25
	Female	135.81	21.49	262	

*Significant at the .001 level

The results on the age variable show that the differences among the transfer students was significant at the .001 level with the over 26 category achieving higher mean scores than the two younger groups (see Table 2). On

Table 3, it is noted that the oldest category (over 26) of occupational students also had higher mean SAS scores than their younger counterparts, though the differences were nonsignificant. A further observation of both Tables 2 and 3 show that students who were classified as less than 20 years old had lower SAS scores than any of the older groups of students.

DISCUSSION

Views of the self are believed to be closely related to a positive interaction with the individual's environment (Horrocks, 1970, pp. 89-90). The results of this study suggest that students enrolled in the occupational curricula may have greater problems adjusting to the community college campuses than the transfer students. Transfer programs in community colleges are often accorded higher status and prestige than are occupational programs. Instructors of general education courses and counselors may well identify more closely with transfer students as a reflection of their educational preparation.

Perhaps the most striking conclusion we reach from this report is the difference between single and married students on levels of self-acceptance. Marriage is surely one of the most far-reaching decisions made by most individuals, and it does stabilize an important dimension in the development of an identity. The results appear to show that educators must have a keen awareness of the needs of single students with their more fluid lifestyle. The fact that many community college students live at home with parents may indicate greater difficulties in achieving autonomy than is evident for the non-college working and resident college youth. Also included among the singles is the increasing number of divorced students. The adjustment problems that this singles group may face might well affect their self-acceptance, especially if children are involved. Community college educators are becoming only very slowly aware of the concerns that the divorces face as students.

Increasing age was related to higher levels of self-acceptance, though no significant interaction occurred between age and marriage on the three-way ANOVA's. Older students, as a group, have adjusted to a greater variety of environments and are less dependent on parents. Additionally, older students' experiences have provided them opportunities to test various goals and values to the point that their identity is more established than the younger students.

Community colleges have become multipurpose institutions with a highly diverse population. The two largest subgroups, transfer and occupational students, have been most extensively studies on academic factors. With the strong community ties that the two-year campus maintains, increased emphasis on the study of the personality, social and emotional factors of students should provide many worthy insights that should help the educators become more effective in helping the two-year campus and its community develop their potential more fully.

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